The Builder.

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THE close of the year and of the current volume has always been made to afford us an opportunity to express our acknowledgments to friends for continued support, to point out modestly the efforts we have made to deserve their favour, and to endeavour to establish such kindly feelings between ourselves and our readers as should lead them to give us their confidence and esteem. We are not disposed in the present instance to let this opportunity slip; and the less so, because we venture to think that on no previous occasion could we with equal satisfaction appeal to the result of the past year in support of any promises that we may make for the year that is to come.

The merest glance through the present volume will shew that it is by far the best we have yet issued, as we promised it should be at the close of last year, and that it contains a mass of useful and interesting information and a large number of important illustrations, as well of modern buildings and works as of fine ancient examples suggestive of new forms and combinations.

The list under the first head will be admitted by all to be a rich one. Just remember. It includes views of the Kensington Union Workhouse; the Palm-house at Kew (with plan, section, and details); designs for parochial schools, lodging-houses, and labourers' cottages; the Church of *La Villette*, Paris (with details); the new Throne in Canterbury Cathedral; St. Augustine's College, Canterbury; the Font in the *Madeleine*, Paris; Bloomsbury Baptists' Chapel; the Imperial Insurance Office, London; many examples of Street Architecture, foreign and homebred; the Corn-Exchange, Edinburgh; the Hotel *Lacarrière*, Paris; South Hackney Church; a Congregational Chapel, Plymouth; the London Fever Hospital, with plan; the Pilot House, Dover; St. George's Roman Catholic Church, Lambeth; Bridgewater House, London, with plan and details; the Museum of Economic Geology, London, with section and details; the Smallpox Hospital, Highgate, with plans; the Church of St. Boniface, Munich; her Majesty's Marine Residence, Osborne, with plans; St. Isaac's Church, in St. Petersburg; the Royal Insurance Office, Liverpool; Queen's College, in Cork; and other structures,—examples of the art of thirty living architects.

Then, under the other head, will be found, views of Oundle Church, Northamptonshire; the North Porch of Wells Cathedral; the South Porch and the Chapter-house, of Lincoln; Titchmarsh Church, Northamptonshire; the Parvise of Lemington Church, Somerset; the Hall once in Saffron Walden; and the *Pesaro* Palace, Venice; Sedilia Holy-cross Abbey, Tipperary; Arm-rests; Bench-ends; Ironwork; Lectern; Fonts; Windows; fine decorative works of the *Renaissance* period; and illustrations (with an ulterior view) of the use made of natural types in ornamentation by the mediæval artists.

Something might be said, too, of personal visits of inspection to the Anston, Caen, and Aubigny stone quarries; and to various parts of France, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Lincolnshire, Bristol, Worcester, Manchester, and Liverpool, for the information of our readers; of experiments on girders, cements, &c.; of the results of our efforts in respect of design, decoration, sanitary improvements, and gas; and of numerous excellent essays, by writers of acknowledged eminence, which are scattered throughout the volume.

We must not, however, risk the good will of our readers, or the imputation of egotism, by dwelling too long on what we have done. It concerns them more to know that we shall commence the coming year with renewed energy, and a determination to leave no means untried to improve the character of our work, and render it more and more worthy of the objects to which it is devoted. In endeavouring to effect this, we need and we seek the assistance, consideration, and sympathy of all our readers. Maryatt, speaking of newspaper literature, and the weight of an editor's task, says—"it is not the writing of any one article itself, but the obligation to write articles every week, whether inclined or not, in sickness or health, in affliction, disease of mind, winter and summer, year after year, tied down to the task, remaining in one spot. It is something like walking a thousand miles in a thousand hours. I have a fellow feeling, for I know how a periodical will wear down one's existence. In itself it appears nothing—the labour is not manifest, nor is the continual attention which it requires. You become, as it were, the publication. One week is no sooner corrected and printed than on comes another. It is the stone of Sisyphus, an endless repetition of toil, a constant weight upon the mind and spirits; demanding all the exertions of your faculties, at the same time you are compelled to do the severest drudgery." Now, without seeking commiseration for what is to us, though a task, ordinarily one of gratification and delight, we quote this in support of our claim to the kind consideration of readers, and would ask them further to remember that a paper cannot be printed for the special benefit of one. Our readers are of several classes, distinct though connected, and it is our constant study to provide all in their turn with information in their particular walks, and further to lead their attention to those which adjoin and illustrate.

The acquirement of knowledge generally we never cease to advocate, having no agreement with those who fear the "organic changes" which this spread of knowledge is to work. With the Dean of Ripon (at the recent *soirée* of the Leeds Literary Society), we would ask,—Can there be a single subject of Great Britain—a single inhabitant of our country or member of society, who directly or indirectly is not benefited by the general improvement in the morals, and manners, and minds of his countrymen? "Take it as a common principle," said the reverend gentlemen, "and if you call it a change—if you call it an organic change—I have no objection to the use of the term; but I do assert that there must be a universal benefit from efforts which enlighten, and civilise, and educate, and make happy, the multitude upon whom the peace of our country—upon whose industry the wealth of our country—must always exist."

While urging our younger readers to get *knowledge*, we have not omitted to point out the greater importance of WISDOM. Earnestly we exhort them so to shape their course that they may have every inducement hereafter to say with the old man in Mr. Dickens's new story, "Lord, keep my memory green," and so find in the retrospect of a well-spent manhood a source of pure enjoyment in old age.*

ON THE MARBLES AND ORNAMENTAL MASONRY OF THE BRITISH ISLANDS.†

Alabaster.—The present workers of this material call themselves very absurdly *petrifactioners*. This stone has been worked for a very long period; indeed it would appear to have been the only English stone at one time employed in sculpture: many of the old monuments in our cathedrals and churches are partly made of it. The statue of Stowe, the historian, in St. Andrew's-under-Shaft, Leadenhall-street, is sculptured in it, and there are specimens in existence executed 800 years since.

From the accounts of the early working of this substance it appears that the objects made were really of an elegant design, from which they have degenerated; while, in other productions of a harder and brittle quality, the workers have advanced in skill and execution. These petrifactioners, as they call themselves, appear to have retrograded so much as to be incapable of producing a design which will not annoy a person of taste by its unsightly appearance; and yet the material itself is most favourable for the workman's tool and the chisel of the sculptor.

Although of a soft nature, lumps are frequently found of a harder and closer texture, and formerly were much used for architectural purposes, forming columns, pilasters, and mouldings. At the present time, however, this production is little prized, and this has probably arisen from the little attention paid to those works executed in it, and not to a dislike of the material itself. The Italians have their white, yellow, agate, and granite alabaster, each of which they take care to present to us worked in the best forms they can procure, and, to judge from the great quantities imported, must find a ready sale among the English.

An Italian alabaster merchant lately visiting England, expressed his astonishment at the little use made of this stone for ornaments of a higher class, adding the sentiment, that he wished the quarries were in Italy, for then they would shew what could be done in works of a superior kind.

Black Marble.—The alabaster and spar, it will be seen, were the two principal substances which had occupied the attention of the Derbyshire masons: the former (a sulphate of lime) doubtless was brought into use principally from the facility with which it could be wrought; but this remark does not apply to the latter, or black marble, which now awaits attention.

Of the marbles found on the estate of his Grace the Duke of Devonshire, all (with one exception) may be freely purchased and worked by the masons: the exception is a red marble of fine colour, which is not suffered to be used save for the purposes of the noble owner, for whom, at times, it is made into elegant ornaments for presentation to his friends. In colour, it surpasses the famed rosso-antique.

To this nobleman belongs honour for the high state of perfection to which ornamental masonry has attained in this country; for under his patronage have been executed the most difficult and beautiful designs.

The manufacture of black marble into ornaments has now existed about forty years; but so high did prejudice obtain in the minds of the spar and alabaster workmen, that those who were interesting themselves to introduce this very beautiful mineral production into use were exposed to some most severe remarks and annoyance: it was said they were bringing ruin upon the people in that part. I need scarcely say, as it is pretty well known, the result has been just the opposite; for, in addition to the workers of alabaster and spar, numbers are employed in quarrying, sawing, cutting, and working into various forms the black marble.

* An Index has been prepared, and, with the title-page, will be presented *gratuitously* with the next number. A title-page in colours may be obtained on application, also gratuitously, by those subscribers who prefer it to that which accompanies the index. Covers for THE BUILDER may be obtained at the office, price 2s., or the publisher will undertake to bind the numbers at 3s. per volume.

† See p. 615, *ante*.